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Pentagon Denies Data Concealed

Associated Press

The Pentagon has labeled "not true" an allegation that reports and photographs of bomb damage to a Cambodian village were kept from authorities above Seventh Air Force headquarters.

The allegations were made in an anonymous letter released Thursday by Sen. Harold E. Hughes, (D-Iowa). The letter was signed only "a concerned Air Force officer."

The writer, describing himself as an intelligence officer with the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Technical Squadron in Vietnam, claimed that photographic evidence of bomb damage to a Cambodian village was kept from higher authority and that "intelligence was deliberately withheld from those in higher headquarters with a need to know."

The Pentagon said Friday that the Seventh Air Force had conducted an investigation which "revealed that the village was a military supply and ammunition storage point for the enemy forces."

The statement said the incident, on March 7, was "reported promptly to all higher headquarters through the operational reporting system and through intelligence channels."

The Pentagon said photo analysis was received by the Defense Intelligence Agency three days after the incident.

The Seventh Air Force conducted an investigation "because of the unusual level of secondary explosions and the damage to the village," the Pentagon said.

Special photographs were taken and the film was held at the 12th Reconnaissance Intelligence Squadron until the investigation was completed, the statement said.